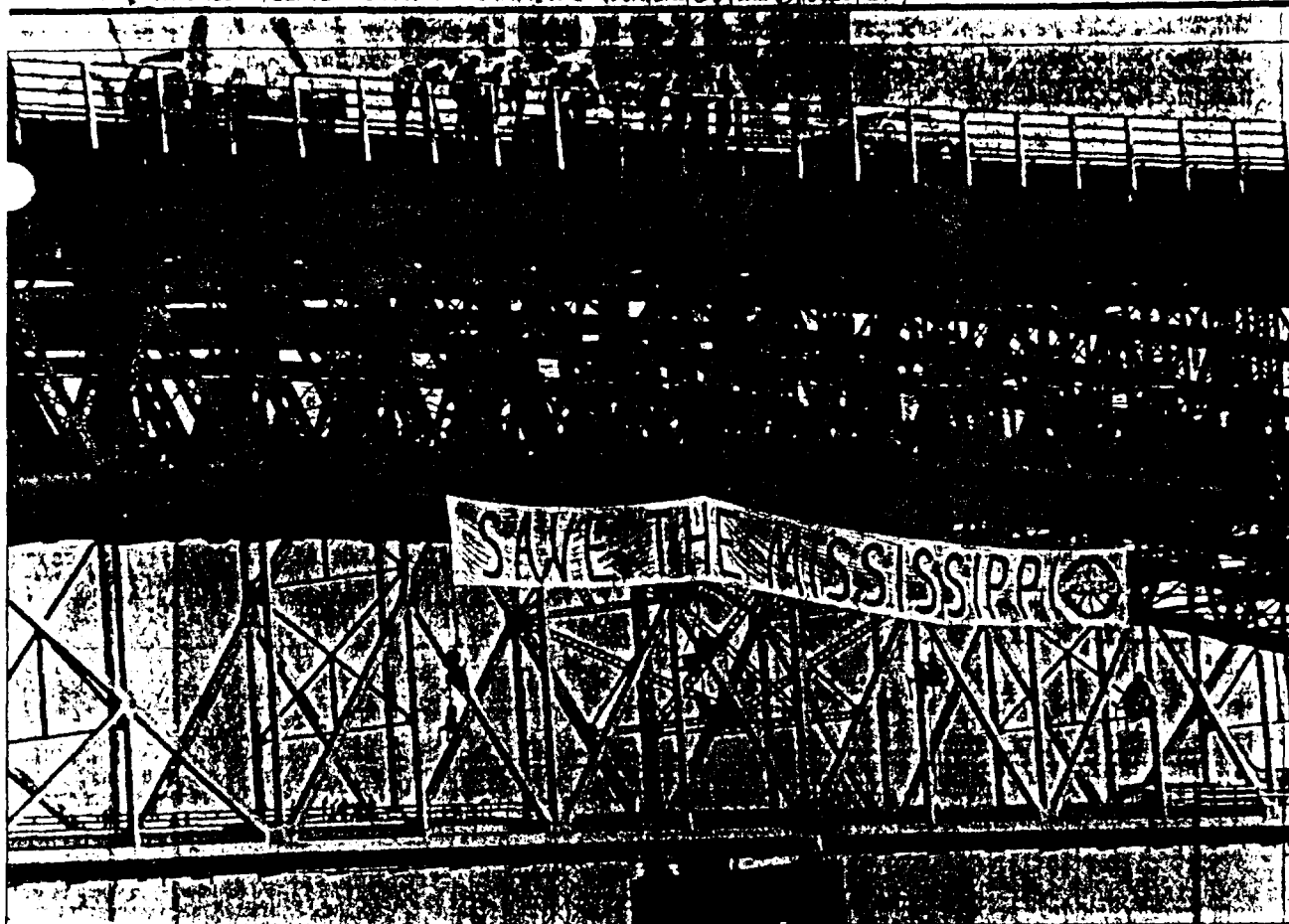


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Firefighters and police officers looking on from above as members of the Greenpeace environmental group hung a banner from the Eads Bridge Wednesday morning. Five members of the group were arrested for trespassing.

Ted Dargan/Post-Dispatch

Environmentalists Put Banner On Bridge

By Christine Bertelson
Of the Post-Dispatch Staff

At 4 a.m. Wednesday, only a few sleepy pigeons on Eads Bridge were aware of four young women poised in the steel truss work with mountain climbing gear.

But by 10 a.m., scores of police officers, firefighters (complete with hook-and-ladder trucks, ambulance, and "heavy rescue" corps) and a crowd of tourists and motorists had gathered below to watch the women — environmental activists with the group Greenpeace — dangling from the bridge with a banner that read "Save the Mississippi" — Greenpeace.

The gesture, a sort of farewell to the Mound City, snarled traffic on the bridge and landed the climbers in jail.

After furling their banner, the climbers ascended the ropes and were arrested. Two inflatable rafts from Greenpeace's research vessel, the Beluga, waited below the bridge, along with a city fire department fireboat.

The four climbers and a fifth member of Greenpeace were booked on suspicion of trespassing and disturbing the peace. Arrested were: Alexandra Bruehl, 24, of Northampton, Mass.; Annie Leonard, 25, of San Francisco; Mary Woodhouse, 33, of

West Palm Beach, Fla.; Elizabeth Fitzgerald, 25, of Covington, Ky.; and Jackie Hunt, 24, of Minneapolis.

Eads Bridge is private property, owned by the Terminal Railroad Association. The Railroad Association's chief of security, L.H. Shelby, could not be reached for comment.

Greenpeace spokesman Bradley Angel said the action was part of the group's crusade for clean water. The Beluga has been moored in St. Louis for nine days, part of a six-month journey through the Great Lakes and down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. The Beluga is scheduled to leave today for Cape Girardeau, Mo. A week ago, police arrested four other Greenpeace activists who had

climbed a 225-tall smokestack at the Metropolitan Sewer District's Bissell Point sewer plant. Members of the group also tried unsuccessfully to block a discharge pipe that they said contained toxic pollutants from the American Bottoms Treatment Plant in Sauget, less than a mile south of the Poplar Street Bridge.

Angel said the group had planned to hang its banner after scaling the outside of the Arch using heavy-duty magnets.

"We had figured out a safe way to climb up, but not to climb down," Angel said. "I didn't want to hold a press conference over a splattered climber."